



Cheshire & Merseyside Hospital Food Project: Summary

The purpose of the hospital food project was to support the six Merseyside Trusts, (employing collectively around 16100 staff) in addressing their NHS corporate citizen responsibilities in order to meet the requirements of the *Choosing Health* white paper and the public health domain for the Healthcare Commission's Assessment of Trusts.

In autumn 2007, an audit of food provision was undertaken by Heart of Mersey (HoM) to assess current food provision and practices and assess staff views and awareness of initiatives in place to promote healthy eating. As a result of that audit recommendations were made which the catering team then sought to implement.

In the summer of 2008 a social marketing company *ICE* was employed to give training in social marketing techniques to staff and to support a three month social marketing campaign called '*Nourish*'.

An external evaluation of the project was carried out. The evaluation measured to what extent the project and the *Nourish* campaign have brought about positive change in the catering facilities and amongst hospital staff.

Quantifiable improvements:

- Reformulating recipes resulted in the saturated fat content being reduced in many meals by 4g per portion.
- Switch to healthier baked beans resulted in a reduced salt intake by 0.6g and sugar by 3g.
- Change in menus: e.g. white rolls replaced with wholegrain resulting in an increase in fibre intake.
- Pork pies removed from one hospital's menu.
- One hospital reduced the number of meals containing red meat and more white meat is now used.
- Some hospitals introduced healthier alternative fish dishes.
- Increase in the purchase of healthy eating options across trusts -up to 50% in some products
- Successful introduction of new healthier snacks, healthier crisps, healthy grab and go range.
- Improved salad bar and increased promotion of fruit and vegetables eg. free vegetables/ salad/fruit included in meal deals

Catering managers highlight key benefits of involvement in project:

- Networking with other catering managers
- Raising the profile of their departments – more recognition from directors
- Media coverage from their *Nourish* launch day.
- Encouraging better health and lifestyle among Trust employees
- Education and insight into packaging of meals

Hospital staff views on the impact of the project:

- Most agreed choice and quality of food had improved. Hospital staff highlighted in particular more healthy options on offer, particularly salads, home made soups, healthy meal deals.
- Hospital staff were aware of efforts being made to improve dining experience with theme days & other promotions.

Other improvements:

- 6% increase in number of staff satisfied with catering facilities and 8% decrease in those dissatisfied.
- Awareness of healthy eating events increased by 13%
- 35% of staff had noticed changes in positioning of healthy options
- 38% had noticed improvements in salad bar options
- 40% were aware of healthier food promotions
- One in ten staff stated changes made had made an impact on their purchasing & experience
- A 1/3 agreed catering & choice of food had improved

Ensuring changes are sustained post project:

To ensure that the hospitals continue to build on the improvements they have made during the campaign, the following has been introduced;

- Heart of Mersey has organised and delivered health awareness raising events in each hospital to support the FSA with their national campaigns i.e. Sat Fat & Salt. The hospitals are being encouraged to continue to have health promoting events and support the FSA with their national campaigns.
- A self-monitoring form has been introduced so that the hospitals can monitor progress and identify areas for improvement on a monthly basis.
- The Hospital Food Project Network Group will continue to meet quarterly, allowing for the catering managers to meet and discuss best practice.
- Restaurant User Groups (RUG) have also been organised so that hospital staff can meet with catering managers every three months and discuss the food that is available to hospitals staff.